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McRoberts takes CERP helm

Summary: Tom McRoberts does not aspire to create a new mission for Continuing Education and Regional Programs. As new director, he will build on the mission and vision and the tradition of service that has characterized CERP over its entire history.

(February 14, 2006)-Tom McRoberts does not aspire to create a new mission for Continuing Education and Regional Programs (CERP) at the University of Minnesota, Morris. As the department's new director, McRoberts said, he will build upon the current mission and vision of CERP and the tradition of service that has characterized CERP over its entire history.

While McRoberts readily acknowledges that the department is not the only unit on campus that provides outreach programs beyond the campus, "CERP has continued to be the primary outreach center for UMM and it reflects the strengths of the institution," said McRoberts. "We will continue to help UMM serve the communities of which we are a part—be they local, regional or international."

"McRoberts is the best possible candidate for this position," said Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Dean John Schwaller in making the position announcement.

"I am extremely pleased to see Tom given full responsibility as he is so deserving and unquestionably qualified," said Roger McCannon, former director of CERP. "His loyalty to the campus, his knowledge of the University and his passion for helping students learn are remarkable assets. He's a workhorse with a great sense of humor. All that come into contact with him will be impressed by his intellect. This is a wise move by UMM, and I'm really very happy for Tom."

One might say that McRoberts grew naturally into his new job. "Essentially" said McRoberts, "I came to dinner and stayed forever."

A 1968 graduate of UMM, McRoberts returned to the campus following an absence of four years to work in the Social Science Division and to teach a Summer Session course in political ideology. He started in Continuing Education and Regional Programs in the summer of 1975 as an adviser and administrator in the Morris Learning Center and stayed on after that to work in Continuing Education, first as assistant director and eventually as associate director of the department. Along the way, he occasionally taught history in the UMM Social Science Division and in the First Year Seminar and served as the coordinator of UMM's first freshmen course called "Inquiry: Values in the Changing World." In the early 1990s, McRoberts helped establish the Center for International Programs at UMM, which he also now directs, and served as the University of Minnesota's coordinator of interactive television administered through the College of Continuing Education on the University's Twin Cities campus. He also served as the interim director of the Distance Learning and Media Resources in the College of Continuing Education, Twin Cities.

McRoberts praised the work of his predecessor, Roger McCannon who served as the director of CERP since 1975 and as the first director of the Center for Small Towns until his retirement in 2004. “Roger’s contributions to UMM, to Morris and to this entire area have been extremely significant. Not only that, he created goodwill that has served UMM well—everywhere I go, people know Roger McCannon.”

Today, the department that McRoberts directs offers a variety of programs under three primary umbrellas: Extension Classes, Summer Session and Regional Programs. In addition, it administers two somewhat autonomous units, the Center for International Programs and the Center for Small Towns. The Center for International Programs provides study abroad opportunities for UMM students and works with international students.

The Center for Small Towns serves the citizens, organizations and communities of western Minnesota through community related projects, program evaluation, statistical analysis and more. It also sponsors the widely acclaimed Symposium on Small Towns.

Other opportunities offered by CERP include programs for youth, such as Summer Scholars and the Henjum Creative Study Institute. The Global Student Teaching and English Language Assistant programs, offered in corporation with the UMM Division of Education, place UMM students throughout the world. In collaboration with the University of Minnesota, Duluth campus, CERP offers a Master of Education degree, for those in education and related professions. To compliment the growing relationship between UMM and China, CERP offers Chinese language courses, a May Session program in China, and this summer UMM will host students from China in its Summer Scholars program.

So as the saying goes, the more things change, the more they remain the same. While CERP has continually evolved to meet the changing needs of the communities it serves, its programs invariably reflect the mission of UMM and the needs of its students.

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